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S.R. 152 and S.C.R. 64

ENCOURAGING EFFORTS TO SAVE THE WHALES

Senate Committee on Ecology, Environment and Recreation
Public Hearing, 16 February 1977

by

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S. R. 152 and S.C.R. 64 are identical resolutions commending the Greenpeace Foundation's efforts to save the great whales, urging the United States to include a proviso in upcoming negotiations on its 200-mile fisheries limit with Japan and the Soviet Union to stop whaling and adhere to a 10-year moratorium on all commercial whaling and to urge the Governor to declare the week of February 20-26 as Save the Whales Week. Copies of this resolution would be submitted to appropriate members of the executive and legislative branches of State and federal governments and the Greenpeace Foundation.

Our statement on S.R. 152 and S.C.R. 64 has been submitted to the Legislative Subcommittee of the Environmental Center for review. The statement does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The intent of these resolutions is commendable and certainly we would agree that continued efforts are appropriate to protect the existing populations of whales. We find, however, a number of specific points in the resolution as presently worded which are either in error or which in our judgment may result in an adverse impact on sensitive negotiations currently being addressed at the State Department level.

On page 1, paragraph 5, it is noted that the 16-member International Whaling Commission (IWC) has failed to institute a 10-year moratorium on commercial hunting of all whales. It should be recognized, however, that the U.S. position has been to agree with the current quotas established by the IWC as biologically reasonable although the U.S. IWC delegation still pushes for a moratorium.

Page 2, paragraph 3, there are no international quotas covering the hunting of Fin and Gray whales although some aboriginal take of gray whales occurs in the Soviet Union. The spelling of Minkeu whales is in error.

Page 2, paragraph 6. Greenpeace operations have not resulted in saving an estimated 1400 whales last summer and another 1300 in 1975. There is no evidence that the whaling nations have failed to take their quotas of whales. Greenpeace operations may well have increased the cost to the whaling fleets in requiring them to travel further for the number of whales they have taken. Furthermore, Greenpeace operations have contributed greatly toward public awareness of the whaling industry and the need for further protection.

Page 3, paragraph 2. There are serious inconsistencies with the 200-mile limit fisheries act, International Whaling Commission, Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. These are currently being worked out at the State Department level. It would seem most unwise, without extremely careful and full knowledge of these inconsistencies and the current negotiations to remedy them, to attempt to direct negotiations with Japan and the Soviet Union.

It is regretable that the U.S. kills more cetaceans (whales) each year than all other nations combined. Porpoise or dolphins are members of the toothed whales just as Sperm whales, and are killed in numbers exceeding 100,000 per year in tuna seines. The U.S. also has an expanding native fishery for the severely depleted species, the Arctic Bowhead Whale. The Bowhead is so rare as to be thought extinct until a few years ago.

These inconsistencies in practice within the U.S. are causing large problems in international negotiations for the control of whaling.

We would like to suggest that the resolutions as presently drafted be reworded, in view of the points we have addressed. In addition, we feel it essential that any such resolution dealing with efforts to protect the whales recognize the ongoing efforts of the State of Hawaii in such matters. Specifically, these efforts have been directed toward study of the fragile Hawaiian population of Humpback Whales. Considering the importance of these efforts within the State, we suggest that the Legislature add the following to the resolution:

Be it further resolved that the State of Hawaii applauds the efforts underway by the University of Hawaii researchers and representatives of Sea Life Park under sponsorship of the National Marine Fisheries service to study the Hawaiian Humpbacked Whales in order to assist in their protection and conservation.